

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00015034993

CT

275

W524J4

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap.

CT275

Shelf

W524 II4

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

Dep. State. Rec? 9 Oct. 1843.

OF

CHARLES STEARNS WHEELER, A. M.,

WHO DIED AT LEIPZIG,

JUNE 13, 1843 — AGED TWENTY-SIX YEARS.

By W. A. D.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.

1843.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

OF

CHARLES STEARNS WHEELER, A. M.,

WHO DIED AT LEIPZIG,

JUNE 13, 1843 — AGED TWENTY-SIX YEARS.

HB²
By W. A. D.

By (William Augustus) James ✓

BOSTON: (B)

JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.

1843.

ET 275
W524 J4

8-14-17

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1843, by
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

5677

BOSTON:
THURSTON, TORRY AND CO., PRINTERS,
13 Devonshire Street.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

It is just four years since a young man in the vigor of his early manhood was offering to the public, through the medium of a periodical, a tribute to the memory of two cherished friends, who had been called away from the earth in the morning light of their promise. And now another young man is sadly turning to write a feeble expression of his appreciation of that former biographer, within a few months himself called to another and a holier life, to join, we trust, in glad communion with the friends whom his youthful heart has mourned and his pen commemorated.

CHARLES STEARNS WHEELER, a graduate of Harvard University in the class of 1837, the biographer of Charles Hayward, Jr. and Samuel T. Hildreth, is now gone from us, and in a foreign land are buried the earthly remains of him whom we propose to notice.

Born in Lincoln, a town in the vicinity of Boston, and in early life educated in the simplicity and the sincerity of a New England country home, he entered Harvard University as a member of the Freshman Class of 1833. To the attainment of this end, the cherished aim of his boyhood, he had personally contributed no small amount of labor. The routine of study which forms the usual condition of admission to the portals of our Universities, was not the only requisite for our friend. An almost in-

satiable love for information had created in the mind of the boy a want of books, and an imperious demand for extended facilities for instruction ; and the means for gratifying the want and satisfying the demand were in part to be obtained at the cost of personal labor in a field other than the school room and the study. But the impediments of somewhat restricted pecuniary circumstances could do little to oppose the progress of a determined mind, which would have culture, and which struggled in consciousness of its own capacity for improvement. A quick intelligence, a retentive memory, and a commendable and unwearied industry characterized the earlier years of the collegiate career of Mr. Wheeler. With the unsophisticated freshness of the country, the young student had brought the open heartedness, the honesty, and the joyousness which had been engendered and developed in the atmosphere of his happy home. The affability of his manner was an introduction to the kindness of his heart, and the friend whom his bright face and kindly smile had first attracted, was confirmed and secured in his interest by the knowledge of Mr. Wheeler's true and constant regard. Most endeared to those who knew him best, he was one who knew no enemies. The amiability of his character forbade him to nourish in his own breast any spirit of ill-will.

The earlier years of undergraduate life had made Mr. Wheeler esteemed as a friend ; the later period made him respected as a scholar and a thinking man. At the Commencement in 1837, the second honors of the University fell to his lot, and his performance on that occasion was worthy of his place. For some months previous to the termination of his senior year, he had, with characteristic industry, been engaged in the work of teaching, and after his graduation this labor was continued and in-

creased. As a teacher of boys he was kind but energetic, considerate but accurate, firm but not severe. The affection of his pupils and the confidence of their friends, it was in almost every case his good fortune to secure. The labor of instruction was lightened to him by a high appreciation of the importance and the utility of his profession, and to be in one or another form a teacher was the business which he proposed to himself in life.

In the winter of 1838-9 a vacancy occurred in the Greek Tutorship of Harvard University, which Mr. Wheeler was called upon temporarily to fill, and a full confirmation in the office soon succeeded to the first provisional appointment. In this way he became a member of the government of the University in which he had been educated, and towards the instructions of which he had from his early childhood eagerly turned. The relation with his Alma Mater which was thus established was continued till the end of the last academical year, at which period he resigned his office in contemplation of a tour and residence abroad. During the last two years of his residence at Cambridge he had also fulfilled the duties of Instructor in History, and had devoted no inconsiderable attention to studies in this department of education.

Of Mr. Wheeler's life as a Tutor, we shall be led to speak somewhat in detail, since the maturest years of his short life were passed in the performance of the duties of this office. Entering unexpectedly upon its responsibilities, he assumed the instruction of a class of young men in a course of study to which his previous tastes had not particularly called his attention. Though a good classical scholar to the extent which was reached in the established collegiate course, he had not devoted that critical attention to Greek literature which enables one to instruct with perfect readiness, in the certainty of full preparation

for any question which may arise. But industry can overcome disadvantages greater than these, and we confidently assert, that even in the earliest period of his tutorship, Mr. Wheeler never failed to his pupils, and never disappointed the hopes which had been based upon his performance of duty. In his relations to the young men under his care, he was friendly and kind. Anxious to break down a certain wall of separation which is but too apt to arise between the teacher and the taught, he was always ready to welcome students as his friends, and would devote to them a personal attention beyond the limits which the calls of official duty required. As a member of the board of internal government, he was active and energetic, seeking rather to prevent than to detect transgressions. We are well aware that at a former period a different opinion prevailed, and that a temporary excitement had served to establish for a while a very false estimate of the character of our friend. But that excitement has disappeared with the circumstances which gave it rise, and with it has vanished that injustice and misrepresentation which for a time prevailed. The writer of this notice, a classmate and dear friend of him whom he now mourns, can offer his personal evidence to the kindness of Mr. Wheeler to the students under his care. In the course of an intimate acquaintance and intercourse, repeated instances of leniency to the full extent of conscientious discharge of duty, have fallen within his knowledge, and a free communication of sentiment on the subject of government, enables the writer to declare that the tutor, for a time so harshly treated, was then, as always, the considerate and kind-hearted friend. On this subject we have no wish to dwell. The ill-will to which we have alluded was but temporary, and has long since passed away. A pleasant contrast is to be

observed in the proceedings of the class last under his care; a class, which on the eve of his departure for Europe, presented with kindest words and grateful acknowledgments, a valuable gift of remembrance, which the manner of presentation made doubly acceptable to its receiver. It was a kind and a delicate sentiment which actuated these young men in the course which they pursued. The thought that their regard was fully appreciated by him whom they respected and esteemed, will mingle pleasantly with their sad recollections of him and his early death.

The labors of instruction and discipline were not the only ones which Mr. Wheeler, during his tutorship, performed. The preparation of an edition of Herodotus had occupied much time during the later part of his residence in Cambridge, and its last sheets had but just been yielded from the printers when its editor first went abroad. The diligent labor, the extended research which were bestowed upon this work are known to the writer. A critical notice of it would be misplaced here, and has already been offered through more suitable media, and from more competent hands. The accuracy and completeness of the work have done honor to the scholarship of the editor, and favorable notices in journals of high authority at home and abroad, have served to manifest the appreciation of the labor which was so freely bestowed. The accuracy of typographical execution in this work has been favorably and justly mentioned. The attention which ensured it was almost the last bestowed here, and had hardly ceased when Mr. Wheeler sailed for Havre. He had in contemplation further labor in this very field. In a letter he says, — “I have lately been inspecting the manuscripts in the University Library, and have at last, at Dr. Bähr’s recommendation, commenced

the collation of Lysias in the edition of Reiske, with the oldest known manuscript of that author. The Dr. tells me I shall learn so to estimate the difficulties, and to understand the doubts of editors better than I should in any other way." And in another letter received but two months before his death, the last which he was able to write to one who was his constant correspondent, he says, —

"Bähr has offered me the use of his manuscript notes on Herodotus, made since the publication of his edition, and several weeks can be advantageously spent in their study. Very kind of him, is it not?"

And this study was to form a part of the work of the summer, which a tour in Switzerland was also to serve to occupy. That summer in its opening found him on a bed of disease, and ere half its earliest month had passed away, the clay-cold form was all that earth retained of the one who formed the resolutions. Talkest thou of the morrow? Look down into the grave. Grieveest thou then in its contemplation? Look upward and beyond it, and thou shalt see the light.

Some lighter literary efforts relieved severer labors. The first two volumes of Macaulay's *Miscellanies* were published under the supervision of Mr. Wheeler. This publication doubtless served very considerably to introduce to readers on this side the Atlantic, the brilliant *Essays* of this accomplished and celebrated man. Yet a pure and elevated taste had led Mr. Wheeler to form a modified appreciation of his author, which while it fully acknowledged the great and remarkable merits of his compositions, fell short of a blind enthusiasm which prevented a perception of their defects. In a letter he says, —

"Macaulay's article on Warren Hastings I have read with great interest. The article is one of Macaulay's

best. So clear, so learned, so clever. You ask while reading it, is not this one of the greatest men? But unfortunately when you have got through you feel that you are no wiser nor better than when you began; and that all this seeing and head-work might be spared for one glow of true feeling, for one beat of a tender heart."

Is there not here the germ of a sound criticism on this writer, to whom expediency seems in literature as in politics, so important and so controlling a motive? a view of expediency based doubtless on keen insight, cool deliberation, and naturally sound judgment, but not the less traceable to a consideration of advantage, with but slender regard for the abstractly true and right.

"Impey," says Macaulay, "hanged Nuncomar in order to support Hastings. It is therefore our deliberate opinion that Impey, sitting as a judge, put a man unjustly to death in order to serve a political purpose." "But we look on the conduct of Hastings in a somewhat different light."

And then follows an apologetic strain for the Governor and Head, of whom Impey was the selfish but subservient tool; and the apology is—expediency—for "the conviction of every native was that it was safer to take the part of Hastings in a minority, than that of Francis in a majority." And to attain this end the Brahmin Nuncomar was hung.

A more congenial labor had preceded the preparation of Macaulay's Miscellanies for the American press. Mr. R. W. Emerson has, as is well known, published the Essays of his friend, Thomas Carlyle, and in the work of publication Mr. Wheeler bore a considerable part. To this work, from sympathy with the views of the author, and a high appreciation of the realness and sincerity of the man, he came with his whole heart. An acquaint-

tance to which this labor was an introduction, would doubtless have been ripened into personal friendship had Divine Providence permitted that meeting which had been one anticipated result of the visit to the older world.

A kindred interest in another English writer induced him very recently to take measures to secure the republication in this country of the Poems of Alfred Tennyson, which have been but lately issued from the press of William D. Ticknor, in a style which will favorably compare with their trans-Atlantic original. In both the cases last mentioned Mr. Wheeler afforded his services as gifts of love, and in both cases a balance of proceeds has been transmitted to London to remind the authors of the estimation in which their talents are here held. The friendship of Tennyson would have been another result of a visit to England. In a letter bearing date Heidelberg, November, 1842, he says, —

“I have received a very kind letter from Tennyson, in which he talks of being of half a mind to join me in some part of my travels, and asks me to send him word beforehand of the time of my visit to England; otherwise I might fail of seeing him. I count on a very kind reception from him some eighteen months hence.”

We come now to another important occupation of Mr. Wheeler during the years of his tutorship at Harvard. Previous to his graduation in 1837, he had determined to devote himself to the ministry, and this determination was never in his subsequent life left out of mind. Having devoted a portion of his time to the requisite studies, he was approbated to preach but a few weeks previous to his departure, and had for a few times assumed the duties of his profession in supplying the pulpits of his clerical friends. He was never connected as a student with the Divinity School at Cambridge, though he was

an attendant at certain of its lectures and other exercises. His idea of the duties of his office was enlarged and exalted. Conscious of the narrowing influence of certain of the pastoral relations as they exist ordinarily among us, it was his wish, as it would have been his aim, to avoid confining his sympathies, efforts, and affections to the limited circle of a parish or a sect. Himself an inquirer and earnest seeker after spiritual truth, he was liberal in his toleration, and eclectic in his philosophy. Not a Swedenborgian, he found much of value and beauty in the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, and freely accepted and gratefully acknowledged all the good which was afforded at his hands. A student of philosophy, he was no man's blind disciple. A preacher of the Gospel and of Goodness, he wished to be no sectarian advocate. In sympathy and in form an Unitarian Preacher, he had a heart to love all holiness, and a mind to appreciate all worthiness and truth. Firm in his view while it was to him vital, he deemed it no shame to change, and could look back in recollection and forward in prospect of modification, confident in the results of honest, earnest, and prayerful seeking after truth. In a letter written at New York, whither he had gone to embark, and on the very day of his departure, he thus speaks, —

“I do not let myself realize the length of my absence from you. God bless you, and keep you. Whether we shall ever meet again on earth, he only knows; but two who are so near and dear to one another must meet again; if not here, then hereafter. I wish you to think of what I said to you when we were together in Roxbury, as I feel that I have now nothing better to say than that. Two years may make me a wiser, and a better, and a loftier man; but they will not so change me but what I shall be willing, nay glad, to tell you my best then.”

The conversation here alluded to was held but just previous to his departure, and embodied his idea of Christ, and of the Sacrament of the Communion. It was his view as then attained, warmly and heartily real to him, but held not as immutable, not necessarily permanent. That morbid feeling for consistency, which would prevent progress for fear of discordance, had no influence over him. We ask not that the tune of to-day shall resound henceforth forever in our ears, but only seek a harmony in the sounds that, occurring in close connection, go to form the tune. Though to-day's note be joyous, to-morrow's may be sad, and yet the instrument is still perfect, and the change is in the touch which sweeps its chords.

Intellectual improvement, professional and general, was Mr. Wheeler's object in going abroad. It had long been his cherished wish to complete in Europe a course of study preparatory to any permanent establishment in life, and though circumstances of a domestic nature seemed for a time to rise up in opposition to the accomplishment of this plan, it was carried into execution, and in August, 1842, he took leave of his numerous friends, and sailed for Havre, in view of two years' residence abroad. In conformity with his original plan, he proceeded to Heidelberg, and in this ancient University City passed the winter of 1842-3, engaged in the acquisition of the German language, attendance on certain lectures, and study of philosophic and classic literature. The purposes in furtherance of which this tour was undertaken are succinctly declared in a letter written to the present writer, soon after the death of a brother. He has spoken of the affliction which has befallen him, and of its possible influence upon his plans. As to his visit abroad, he says, —

“All will depend upon a conscientious view to be taken some eight months hence, of the advantages of going to Germany compared with those of staying at home. I shall not go to gratify any whim, curiosity, or love of distinction. But if I feel that I can probably become a wiser and better man, nobody will blame me for following my early passion.”

The visit thus conscientiously undertaken was carefully improved, and the history of the winter spent at Heidelberg is one of industry and progress. The first months were of necessity mainly devoted to the acquisition of the language, and to this end an attendance on certain lectures was made subservient. Study, social intercourse, and the enjoyment of the scenery and the works of art of Heidelberg and its neighboring Mannheim had served to pass the time quickly and pleasantly away, till in March last a change of residence promised increased advantages. In early March Mr. Wheeler reached Göttingen, and joined there a friend with whom the summer was to be passed in travel and in study. The last letter which the present writer received from him bore date at this city, and is in part as follows, —

“We think to leave Göttingen on 3d April for Weimar and Jena, and shall divide that month between those cities, Leipzig, Dresden, and Halle. The operations for the succeeding months are yet undetermined.”

The next succeeding month was passed upon a bed of illness, and on the 13th day of June, death, with gentle hand, put a period to his earthly pilgrimage, and freed his pure and lovely spirit for a wider range and loftier teachings than this world in all its riches can bestow. A foreign land has received the remains of one who was so dear, and strangers' hands have hollowed out his grave. No mother's form was bending over his death-

pillow, no father's broken voice breathed over him a prayer. The eyes which have been brightened by his smile, had not the melancholy privilege of pouring their tears above his marble brow. The hands that had but lately grasped his own in a hopeful and a trustful farewell, can never again renew their affectionate pressure. The word of love which bade him God-speed as he left us, can never again reach him who slumbers in his distant grave. Sad, sad indeed, the thought that he is gone. Gone in his beauty, his manliness, his purity, and his love. Gone in the fullness of promise, in the gladness of his realized hopes. A whole-souled man is always but ill spared ; how doubly sad the loss when youth and holiness have combined to make him dear. He has gone from us who loved him, and has left in many hearts a void which cannot be filled. He was firm in his integrity, warm in his affections, white and spotless in his purity. Unwearied in industry, he was blessed with powers of intellect which enabled him to attain abundant fruits of his labors. Joyous and serene in temperament, he was fitted to experience the world's best pleasures, and was armed to contend with its sorrows. An unruffled amiability of temper was eminently characteristic of Mr. Wheeler, and did much to endear him to his many friends. No recollection of past ill-nature can arise to shade our remembrance of him, no thought of past unkindness to chill our warm love for his memory. Life wore ever to him a smiling aspect, and its highest developements and its most homely experiences were alike the sources of gratitude and love.

"Do what I will," he says in a letter, "all things *will* wear a shining and a smiling front, and so I cannot help smiles and laughter. Let me laugh then, 'for he who laughs much commits no deadly sin.'"

The letter which next succeeded that from which we have just quoted, contained intelligence of the death of a dear and affectionate brother, and it breathed a tone of confidence and love which comes home to the hearts of those who now mourn for him who wrote it.

“ You remember that in my last letter, I said that life would wear a cheerful look to me, do what I would. I feel bound to say that my state of mind is as cheerful now as at the time of writing that letter. I am not, nor do I care to be, in so *riant* a mood as then. But I now believe as a thing of faith what I have long held as a theory, the perfect manifestations of the Divine Love in the life of each one of us. So far as concerns the living, the saddest experiences are but the shadings in the picture which Providence is ever painting. Sorrow that those we love are taken away is not wrong ; but faith that God holds the issues of life and death in his hands, and that nothing can take place without his will, will rob that sorrow of its sting. I have been called upon to taste a new cup of sorrow, and found that the pang of separation was sharper in this case than ever before ; but found also that I had not lived two years and three quarters since Hildreth’s death for nothing. That event found me a boy ; this finds me a man ; that came upon me a dreamer of theories ; this finds me a believer. That event saddened my feelings for a time ; this, as I verily believe, has deepened my whole nature for eternity. I said then I will resist evil ; now sin seems to me well nigh impossible. My views of life are as cheerful as ever ; my thoughts of death far less unpleasant.”

Let us take example from him who has gone before ; in his own words we may read our consolation ; in the purity of his life we may realize how sin was to him well nigh impossible, how holiness is attainable through

sorrow and bitter tears. He was lovely and beloved, for he was earnest, pure, and true. Away from his home and his kindred, he met his Father's call. Absent, but thank God, not alone, he laid him down to die, and in calmness and serenity breathed forth his latest breath. By friendly hands were his falling eyelids pressed, and a voice of his native tongue was speaking his last farewell.

Not for him should there be mourning, — not for him a single tear. For us has God sent sorrow, for we miss him and are lonely. But in us and around us his gentle influence lives, and with winning power he lures us to his own eternal home. A son, a brother, and a friend, he rests him now within a Father's love, and watches, we would fondly believe, over the parents, the brother, and the friends who are yearning here to meet him. Oh, is not the hope of that meeting a motive for holiness like his? Is not the faith in a spiritual re-union a consolation in our grief? Let us bow in humble submission, and thank God that he has lived thus long, that he has lived for us. We will not repine that he has gone before, for he was fitted to be a pioneer for Heaven. In his steps we would meekly follow, and trust in God that we fail not of his reward.





